

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Commerce

§ 10.40

(6) The nature and length of the professional relationship with the client.

(7) The experience, reputation, and ability of the practitioner or practitioners performing the services.

(8) Whether the fee is fixed or contingent.

§ 10.37 Division of fees among practitioners.

(a) A practitioner shall not divide a fee for legal services with another practitioner who is not a partner in or associate of the practitioner's law firm or law office, unless:

(1) The client consents to employment of the other practitioner after a full disclosure that a division of fees will be made.

(2) The division is made in proportion to the services performed and responsibility assumed by each.

(3) The total fee of the practitioners does not clearly exceed reasonable compensation for all legal services rendered to the client.

(b) This section does not prohibit payment to a former partner or associate pursuant to a separation or retirement agreement.

§ 10.38 Agreements restricting the practice of a practitioner.

(a) A practitioner shall not be a party to or participate in a partnership or employment agreement with another practitioner that restricts the right of a practitioner to practice before the Office after the termination of a relationship created by the agreement, except as a condition to payment of retirement benefits.

(b) In connection with the settlement of a controversy or suit, a practitioner shall not enter into an agreement that restricts the practitioner's right to practice before the Office.

§ 10.39 Acceptance of employment.

A practitioner shall not accept employment on behalf of a person if the practitioner knows or it is obvious that such person wishes to:

(a) Bring a legal action, commence a proceeding before the Office, conduct a defense, assert a position in any proceeding pending before the Office, or otherwise have steps taken for the per-

son, merely for the purpose of harassing or maliciously injuring any other person.

(b) Present a claim or defense in litigation or any proceeding before the Office that is not warranted under existing law, unless it can be supported by good faith argument for an extension, modification, or reversal of existing law.

§ 10.40 Withdrawal from employment,

(a) A practitioner shall not withdraw from employment in a proceeding before the Office without permission from the Office (see §§1.36 and 2.19 of this subchapter). In any event, a practitioner shall not withdraw from employment until the practitioner has taken reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable prejudice to the rights of the client, including giving due notice to his or her client, allowing time for employment of another practitioner, delivering to the client all papers and property to which the client is entitled, and complying with applicable laws and rules. A practitioner who withdraws from employment shall refund promptly any part of a fee paid in advance that has not been earned.

(b) *Mandatory withdrawal.* A practitioner representing a client before the Office shall withdraw from employment if:

(1) The practitioner knows or it is obvious that the client is bringing a legal action, commencing a proceeding before the Office, conducting a defense, or asserting a position in litigation or any proceeding pending before the Office, or is otherwise having steps taken for the client, merely for the purpose of harassing or maliciously injuring any person;

(2) The practitioner knows or it is obvious that the practitioner's continued employment will result in violation of a Disciplinary Rule;

(3) The practitioner's mental or physical condition renders it unreasonably difficult for the practitioner to carry out the employment effectively; or

(4) The practitioner is discharged by the client.